**Lesson Title:** Introduction to Our Place

**Name of Corresponding Unit:** Our Unique Place (Language Arts)

**Creator:** Rachael Gustaveson and Anne Lessard

**Grade level(s):** 7

**Recommended Duration:** 80 minutes

**Essential Question:** How do you learn about a new place?

**Specific Learning Goals for this lesson:**

* Students will know:
* The five themes of geography are place, location, human-environment interaction, movement, and region. The focus of this lesson is *place.*
* Students will understand:
* Every place has certain characteristics.
* Students will be able to:
* Identify the first theme of geography: place.

**Lesson Overview:**

On the first day, the students will receive an introduction to the five themes of geography. The main focus of the day will be the theme of place. Students will begin to explore the various definitions of “place.” They will also begin to observe what makes up their new place: the Woodstock Union Middle School. Every student will be new to the building, thus a writing prompt based on their observations will serve as a pre-assessment on writing skills.

**Description & Sequence:**

1. Introduction to the Five Themes of Geography – Students sit in groups of five and create a list of items that they all have in common. Give 7-8 minutes for time and let each group share. Categorize their commonalities according to the Five Themes on the board so all students can see.
   1. For example, if students say, we all live in Vermont. You can list this under place, region, or location. Allow the students to tell you where they think it fits best, or list it under all three.
   2. Once every commonality is listed, ask the class if they could tell the rest of the class the meaning of each theme based on what is listed under them.
   3. If there is a theme with nothing listed, prompt the students to come up with examples that could be listed there.
2. “In Your Place” activity, adapted from *Teaching the Five Themes of Geography* by Bonnie Dill. In this activity, students will explore all the definitions of “place.” Share.
   1. Transition: Discuss human and physical characteristics of a place – For example – United States.
3. Formative assessment: Each student will write a “show me” paragraph in their journals. Every paragraph will start with: “My new school is different.”
4. Share with class. Discuss and list characteristics of the school.
5. Ticket to Leave: Where is your favorite place and why? What are the human and physical characteristics of this place that you like so much?

**Pre-Assessment:**

Each student will write a “show me” paragraph beginning with: “My new school is different.” Students will be asked to write a paragraph that supports this topic sentence. This will allow the teacher to pre-assess writing skills such as sentence structure, organization, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, and more.

**Formative Assessment(s):**

Ticket to leave: Students will share characteristics of their favorite places on an index card written before they are allowed to leave the class. The teacher will not only learn more about the students this way, but can also determine level of understanding for the theme of place.

How will you **Differentiate Instruction** for various learners?

Because this is the first day of class, differentiation will be low. The teacher is still assessing students’ readiness, knowledge, and skills. However, various learning techniques are in play. Students will be working both in groups and by themselves. Students will have visual and auditory accessibility. Students may write their paragraph with a pen and paper, or on a net book.

**Student-centered learning:**

*Collaboration* - Students will be working in groups and thinking about their own place in a new school. Students will also be getting to know one another further with the group work at the start of class.

*Relevance* - The writing prompt is authentic and based on their lives. The teacher is also trying to learn more about the students’ interests with the Ticket to Leave. The Ticket to Leave could provide future learning opportunities.

*Challenge* – This is the first time students will be writing in the new classroom. This could prove to be very challenging for some, and less so for others.

**Inquiry-based learning:**

Students will be exploring the themes of geography on their own, within the context of their own lives. From this, they will begin to formulate their own definitions of the themes. Furthermore, students will be asking questions of each other to learn more about one another.

**Materials:**

“In Your Place” worksheet

Net books and/or paper and pencil

Index cards

Class journals

**Resources:**

*Teaching the Five Themes of Geography* by Bonnie Dill ([www.itemnie.com/**5themes**.pdf](http://www.itemnie.com/5themes.pdf))

Vermont Standards & Grade Expectations Addressed:

**W7: 4** Students demonstrate command of the structures of the English language by…  
**-**Using the paragraph form: indenting, main idea, supporting details

21st Century Skills including Technology:

Students have the option of word processing on net book instead of writing with a pencil and paper. They may also use the Internet to find a newspaper article for the “In Your Place” activity.

File Attachments:

([www.itemnie.com/**5themes**.pdf](http://www.itemnie.com/5themes.pdf))

In Your Place - Worksheet